Reviewer's report

Title: Drug utilization patterns and reported health status in ethnic German migrants (Aussiedler) in Germany: a cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Jacob Spallek

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Article:

Drug utilization patterns and reported health status in ethnic German migrants (Aussiedler) in Germany: a cross-sectional study

Comments for authors

This interesting paper covers the relevant issue of describing self assigned health status and drug utilization patterns of migrants from the former SU/German resettlers in Germany. The paper fits the scientific scope of BMC Public Health.

This cross-sectional study attempts to describe health status and drug utilization patterns based on a cross-sectional study with 114 participants. Prevalence of major diseases and drug utilization patterns are compared with the data of the general German population drawn from large available data sets from Robert Koch-Institute, Health Insurance etc. Overall, major health risks showed to be very similar in the study population compared to the general population (except for back pain). Drug utilization patterns did not differ in a relevant way, but the Aussiedler quite often used drugs from their country of origin.

The paper has a clear structure, however, it lacks precision in background, methods and discussion section. I recommend the paper for publication after major revisions.

Title
The title of the paper is appropriate.

Abstract
Overall, the summary section gives a good overview of the conducted study.

Minor Revisions:
1. Discussion starts with: “Migrants seem to differ only slightly…”. This is an inadequate generalization. The results of the study do not support the statement that “all” migrants differ or not, restriction to the “Aussiedler “ only is required.

2. In the methods section the deprivation ATC is not explained..

Background
The background in general is appropriately written but in some parts more details would be helpful.

Major Revisions:
3. Please be more careful in writing about “the migrants”. Migrants are a very heterogenic group from very different countries of origin, cultural backgrounds and very different SES, age, health behaviour and health risks, so a more precise description of which migrants exactly are meant is necessary in various sections of the manuscript.

4. Second sentence: “Even in the countries where access to the health services is ensured,...” Which countries? Ensured by what? Ensured for all (e.g. including illegal migrants?)?

5. Third sentence: “Many studies...” in western countries?

6. Third paragraph, second sentence: “Some studies...” where?, “…have observed that migrants” from where?

7. Fourth paragraph, first sentence: “Another aspect ... is the lack” maybe add the “possible” lack.

8. Fifth paragraph. Please add a number about the size of the Aussiedler population. How many Aussiedler came in which time period to Germany, from where.

9. Sixth paragraph, second sentence: “A representative study on comparisons of migrants...” migrants from where? Only Aussiedler or other migrants?

10. Add the end of the background section the aim of the study is described as studying the proportion of medication handling errors (suggestion: change this to inadequate use) in migrants. “We therefore...”. I understand the results section more in the way that describing the major health risks was the main focus of the study. The results section shows interesting results about current health status and common risk factors and only 5 lines deal with handling of medicines. The results section does not fit on the last sentence of the background section.

Methods

Major Revisions:
11. Third paragraph, second sentence: Please explain ATC groups in a short sentence, a reference can be helpful.

12. Fourth paragraph, third sentence: “200 of 559 non-responders were contacted by phone.” Please explain why exactly 200?

13. Fifth and sixth paragraph: For comparisons with the German population...” & “Information on drug intake in the German population...” please explain, if this “German population” contains only autochthonous Germans without migration background or if this population is the general population living in Germany, thus
including ~20% migrants.

14. Please describe, for which reasons the data of “IMS Disease Analyzer database” are collected and what IMS is.

Minor Revision:
15. First paragraph, second sentence: Change “gender” to “sex”

Results

Minor Revisions:
16. Paragraph “Current health status and common risk factors”. Change “gender” to “sex”

17. Paragraph “Current health status and common risk factors”. “However, the proportion of migrants who report some degree of dissatisfaction… (25.5% and 11% respectively).” Please add the p-value.

Discussion

The discussion section is well-structured. The limitations and strength of the study are described clearly.

Major Revision:
18. A sentence should be added, why no stratification for socio-economic factors is shown, because smoking and alcohol consumption are influenced significantly by socio-economic factors in migrant populations (see, for example a study from Reeske et al. 2009 about smoking patterns of Turkish migrants in Germany).

19. Please discuss more explicitly the possibility of a selection bias, e.g. due to low response rate and the high proportion of participants with high educational level.

20. Eighth paragraph: “to allow a generalization of the results on the overall population of migrants in Germany”. Change “migrant population” to “population of Aussiedlers”, see comments above.

Discretionary Revisions

21. Last paragraph: Low participation rates are not only a problem in migrant studies. But just as a suggestion: it would be interesting to learn how the authors rate the effect of their migrant sensitive recruitment methods (questionnaire sent in German and Russian language, interviews in German and Russian).

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.
Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests